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ABSTRACT

The Liberal Studies Seminar (LSS) at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri is described. The University Without Walls (UWW) program was initiated in the early 1970s to provide baccalaureate degrees for adults for whom traditional college attendance was not an option. As part of the original consortium, Stephens expanded its mission as a women's college to serve women over the age of 23 as well as men. Later, all adult programs were incorporated in the School of Liberal and Professional Studies; this, in turn, led to expansion of the LSS. Current objectives of the seminar are to: stimulate intellectual interest; help students identify personal accomplishments, interests, and potential; assure that the student's decision to complete a degree is based on a realistic assessment of personal abilities and aspirations; challenge students to evaluate personal learning and communication styles; assist students to critically examine personal educational plans; and provide the new student with a sense of community with the faculty, staff, and other students in its UWW program. During the seminar the student completes a one-credit academic course, participates in self-assessment experiences, reviews and further develops learning and academic abilities, receives academic advice, and develops a degree plan and projected completion time. Different formats have been used, among them a double weekend seminar and an eight-day seminar. The academic course is interdisciplinary and focuses on the search for meaning in a period of rapid cultural change. Objectives of the self-assessment workshops are identified. (SW)

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LIFELONG LEARNING: SUNRISE AGAIN

Addressing the Needs of Returning Adult Students

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Paper presented at the annual meeting

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education

Hollywood, Florida

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LIFELONG LEARNING: SUNRISE AGAIN*

The original consortium of University Without Walls (UWW) colleges in the early 1970s was funded by the Ford Foundation and the U. S. Office of Education to provide external baccalaureate degrees for adults for whom traditional college attendance was not an option. As a member of the original consortium, Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri expanded its mission as a women's college to include women over the age of 23. Men may also become students in the program. Stephens had a long history of innovation in both content and delivery of education and the faculty responded positively to the challenge to develop new curricula to meet the needs of adults, particularly women. (The program was later changed to the Stephens College Without Walls in 1978 when the college incorporated all adult programs in The School of Liberal and Professional Studies.)

*Special thanks and appreciation are acknowledged for contributions to the preparation of this paper to Jeanine Elliott, Director of the School of Liberal and Professional Studies (SLPS), and Dr. Eugene Shepard, SLPS psychology professor and former Director of the Counseling Service.

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A required entrance course was developed as a common seminar for adults seeking to complete bachelor's degrees. The course began as an interdisciplinary liberal arts course studying theories of human nature and societal change throughout the years. An early professor was Dr. James Rice, Humanities Professor and Dean of Faculty.

The awareness of the college that adulthood is a time of dynamic changes and the realization that personal and professional environments impacted the academic success of the students led Stephens to expand the Liberal Studies Seminar (LSS). The personal and developmental needs of women were addressed through the development of a counseling component for the seminar. In 1974 Dr. Rice asked Dr. Eugene Shepard, Director of the Counseling Service, to observe the class and make recommendations for a counseling component. The component began to evolve in 1975, and since that time the seminar has been team-taught with both an academic and counseling instructor.

Jeannie MacGregor-Jochim, Director of UWW Counseling, (1977) explained that the UWW program addressed the problem "of re-identification, of making a transition from external identity roles to internal identity through utilization of talents, realization of potential, achievement of self-fulfillment." Identifying life goals was another important aspect of the seminar.

Affective and personal/emotional needs were also considered. Counseling and psychology resources were applied to the content of the seminar. As an example, the seminars often included exploration of the basic human needs which are met by group membership and the implications of concepts and writers such as inclusion and belonging (Jung), control and influence (Adler), the need for affection and love (Freud) and creativity and freedom (Maslow).

Among the issues addressed were the students' lack of self-confidence, the reinforcement that their personal experience and maturity were valuable resources for the academic endeavor and the beginning of encouraging risktaking and awareness of potential. Challenge and support were the two essential components of success for the entering students which MacGregor-Jochim (1977) noted. This content was incorporated in six counseling goals:

1. CREATE A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: reduce anxiety; increase self-confidence; build group cohesion and peer support.

2. HELP WITH VALUES CLARIFICATION

3. HELP WITH STUDY SKILLS AND TIME MANAGEMENT

4. HELP IDENTIFY STRENGTHS, SKILLS AND POTENTIALITIES

5. HELP WITH CAREER/LIFE PLANNING PROCESS

6. HELP INTEGRATE PERSONAL LIFE WITH THE LIBERAL STUDIES SEMINAR AND THE UWW PROGRAM - Help relate personal values to the reading and learning in the Liberal Studies Seminar.

Content of the counseling/advising component covered a wide spectrum. Many individual, small and large group exercises were designed to meet the component goals. Study and learning skills activities were designed to hone academic skills which might have fallen into disuse. How to use the library, how to write research papers and journals, etc. were addressed to meet the uncertainty of the students about their abilities to do well academically.

While the academic course looked at societal change, self-assessment workshops were designed to help the students address personal change. Particular focus was given to life changes and experiences prior to college reentry, current situations and future goals and objectives. Degree planning was developed within this personal assessment experience as students addressed how working toward a degree would help them make progress toward their life goals.

As the college gained experience in meeting the needs of adult students, the goals became more refined. Today the Liberal Studies Seminar objectives are:

to stimulate intellectual interest and curiosity;

to provide the student a means for identifying personal accomplishments, interests and potential;

to assure that the student's decision to complete a degree is based upon a realistic assessment of personal abilities and aspirations;

to challenge each student to evaluate personal learning and communicating styles;

to assist each student in a critical examination of personal educational plans; and

to provide the new student with a sense of community with the Stephens College faculty, staff and other students in SCWW.

Components of the Liberal Studies Seminar

During the LSS the student: a) completes an academic course for one course credit; b) participates in a series of self-assessment

experiences designed to help judge abilities, values, motivations and career options; c) reviews, assesses and further develops learning skills and other academic abilities; d) meets with an assigned academic adviser and e) develops a degree plan which includes a projected time line for completion.

The course includes modeling the learning styles and assignments which the students would encounter in completing their degrees. Journals, essays and research papers are usually assigned in addition to individual and group presentations and small and large group discussions.

The college has learned experientially and experimentally to address the needs of students in their 20's, 30's, 40's, 50', 60's and 70's. A beginning question was how long the seminar should be in order to meet the expressed objectives. Different formats have been used. In the beginning a two-week seminar on campus or three weekends in an off-campus location were developed. It became apparent that the needs of the student could be met in less "classroom" time. From the traditional "clock hour in class" approach, the course has evolved to less in-class time and more individual preparation before and after the on-site time, and between weekends for the double weekend seminar. Students choose which seminar format best fits their personal situations and time constraints.

Liberal Studies Seminar Schedule

Double Weekend Seminar	Eight Day Seminar
Individual Advance Preparation	Individual Advance Preparation
During the three weeks prior to LSS Weekend I, student completes assignments from the academic and counseling instructors.	During the three weeks prior to the LSS, student completes assignments from the academic and counseling instructors.
LSS Weekend I	Liberal Studies Seminar
Student attends class sessions Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday.	Student attends class sessions and completes additional assignments given by the academic and counseling instructors.
Individual Study During Interim	
Student prepares additional assignments given during the LSS Weekend I.	Individual Final Study
	Student completes final assignments at home and mails them to the academic instructor for final evaluation and course grade.
LSS Weekend II	

Student attends class sessions Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday.

Individual Final Study

Student completes final assignments at home and mails them to the academic instructor for final evaluation and course grade.

The Academic Course

The academic course of the Liberal Studies Seminar is "The Changing Human Image." It centers on the contemporary search for meaning in a period of rapid cultural change. The course is interdisciplinary and is taught by instructors from a variety of academic departments at Stephens. In addition to a common text, individual instructors use additional readings and materials which relate to their particular areas of interest and expertise. Class sessions tend to be informal, and students are expected to contribute to the learning experience through group discussions and class presentation.

One full course credit (three semester hours) is awarded for successful completion of the seminar. As with most Stephens courses, students should expect to spend 100-140 hourse on course work. This includes individual preparation at home before, during and after the seminar, as well as class time. Assignments to be completed prior to the seminar are substantive, and advance preparation is essential.

Each student receives a grade based on the academic course of the seminar. The grade assigned is Pass/Fail or a letter grade, at the discretion of the instructor. Instructors usually choose to award letter grades.

Self-Assessment Workshops

The counseling instructor is an experienced human services professional who coordinates the self-assessment component of the seminar. This team member has had training and experience in both group and individual counseling and has expertise and interest in the concerns of the adult learner.

The self-assessment workshops of the seminar incorporate several assumptions about how adults learn and the ways students learn most effectively in independent study programs. The student is considered the center of the learning process.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT WORKSHOPS

I. Assessment of myself
    1. Identifying my strengths, weaknesses, assets, and liabilities
    2. Discovering my educational and career interests, latent talents and potentials
    3. Clarification of my basic values and beliefs

II. Building Ego-Strength
    1. Developing a clearer identity of who and what I am
    2. Acquiring deeper understanding of myself and of others in the group

III. Learning to Take Control and Take Charge of My Life
    1. Developing my ability and courage to take charge of my life, to choose my own future direction

2. Learning to lead and to take initiatives

3. Acquiring independence and managing dependence

4. Making decisions and choices

IV. Enriching my Interpersonal Relationships

1. Developing significant friendships with my classmates, teachers and counselors

2. Learning to communicate--to express and share feelings with others

V. Feeling Good About Myself as a Person

1. Acquiring positive self-affirmations and self-images

2. Becoming comfortable and freer to be "me"

Workshops are designed to help increase self-knowledge and awareness of personal resources. The complexity of the adult's decision to obtain a degree is examined by assessing personal needs, motivations, abilities and career options. Workshops explore ways an individual student can enhance and maintain motivation to progress successfully and complete the degree program. Additional workshops focus on building specific skills in the areas of time management, goal-setting and decision-making. Some students have not engaged in formal study for several years. Learning skills workshops are offered to provide an opportunity for students to review such skills as taking exams, writing research papers and giving oral reports.

The self-assessment workshops combine individual and group methods. They are an integral part of the learning experience of

the seminar. Both members of the faculty team actively support the worth and dignity of each person, the contribution of all members to the group, the need for self-knowledge and freedom of choice.

Academic Advising

All students entering the seminar are assigned an academic adviser who works with them in planning their degree programs during the seminar and who continues to assist them as they progress toward their degrees. The adviser is usually the academic instructor or the counseling instructor of the Liberal Studies Seminar.

The LSS advising process leads to each student's decision regarding continuation in the SCWW program. At the completion of the LSS, the student may elect to a) begin the first year program b) become temporarily inactive to complete coursework at a local college or university, or c) withdraw.

Advising begins as degree requirements are presented and explained in a degree planning workshop during the LSS. The student meets individually with the adviser to assess past learning, identify present needs, and anticipate and prepare for future goals. As a result of this process, the planning of the B.A. or B. S. program begins.

Another important aspect of the LSS advising process is helping the student make choices about learning format options which are available. Presently eight-day Liberal Studies Seminars, four and five day on-site courses, double weekend seminars and courses and independent study are available. A workshop on the evaluation of prior learning also is conducted to assist students in determining their eligibility for and interest in this type of academic credit. Stephens participates in the prior learning portfolio process of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (C.A.E.L.). Factors such as individual work/study styles are considered in determining a realistic pace for completing the degree.

The Stephens College Without Walls program is proud of its 800+ graduates, many of whom have continued in graduate and professional schools. Over 1800 students have participated in the program. At present 500-600 students are enrolled who live in most of the 50 states and several foreign countries. For more information about the program, contact:

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